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THE STAR OF THE EAST

ܚܝܠܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ

an ecumenical journal dealing specially with
the oriental and eastern orthodox churches

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**An ecumenical journal dealing specially with
the Oriental and Eastern Orthodox Churches**

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THE STAR OF THE EAST

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MUSINGS ON THE NATURE OF REALITY

As modern science and modern philosophy develop, two separate cleavages appear. The first we seem unable to resolve; the second, some scientists hope can be resolved, though at present we cannot.

The first and irresolvable cleavage is between consciousness and world, between our “inner” or mental perceptions of reality and the “outer” or material world as it is. Most people, including scientists, often assume that the first is a direct copy of the second. People knowledgeable in physics and philosophy cannot so easily make that mistake. Even Marxist theoreticians are abandoning the “copy” theory of the mental image and prefer to speak of a faithful reflection in consciousness of an objectively existing world. Philosophically even this is difficult to sustain. For we know biologically that perceiver and perceived are part of a single system; that it is the nature of our perceiving equipment (our body, our senses, our mind, our prejudices, our cultural paradigms) that makes the perceived look like what it seems to be. There is no perspective outside the system from which the human perceiver can look at the whole in some objective way unaffected by our perceiving apparatus.

The early Madhyamika Buddhists of India understood this two thousand years ago—that the perceived world of manifolds, change and conflict is simply a phenomenon arising under certain conditions. These conditions are partly in the perceiver’s consciousness and partly in reality itself. The Hindu Vedantists preferred to speak of a “protection” (*vikshēpa*) by a factor called *avidya* (non-enlightenment) from one perspective and *māya* (playful projection) from the other. The Buddhist spoke of *pratītyasamutpāda*) or dependent co-origination.

Christians on the other hand spoke of this world as "passing away" of as ultimately to be dissolved and disappear. The attempt on the part of a "secularisation theology" to affirm that the Christian faith has to do with this world (of time) and no other, now appears quite juvenile and uninformed. It was only an emotional and irrational reaction against the exclusive other-worldliness which characterized much Christian thought.

Indian Christians have a responsibility to come to terms with the fact that "reality" of this world is highly dialectical. Obviously, since we have been put here by the Creator, since we believe that God created this world, and since the Son of God was incarnate in this world, we have to take it quite seriously. But not so seriously as to forget the fact that the Incarnate One ascended into another dimension of the universe of which we cannot have any conceptual grasp. But our "citizenship is in heaven"; (Phil. 3:20) we are citizens of the eternal city, sojourners and pilgrims in this world. The ancient Patristic understanding of "heaven" (not as "up there"—that was Bultmann's mis-reading of the tradition) as the dimensions beyond those open to our senses now, begins to "make sense" in modern astronomy, cosmology and physics. And if Christian theology is to become truly vital and coherent, it will have to move out of its epistemological parochialism. The world as we experience it is, at best, our version of one dimension of the universe.

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The other cleavage, also unveiled by modern science, is between the so-called "laws of nature" at the micro and macro levels. We have two sets of scientific laws now—Newtonian mechanics at the macro-level and Quantum mechanics at the micro-level. These laws are in obvious conflict with each other. Scientists are generally unwilling to recognize the scope and significance of this contradiction at the heart of modern scientific knowledge.

After all the "laws" of science are human creations. They are all philosophically unprovable, but simply deductions from a limited number of experiences under particular conditions. Classical Mechanics and Quantum Mechanics are not "ultimate" laws; these have been created by the scientific community to "account" for the data of experience at macro and micro levels. The two, some say, are not in conflict. QM is the general or universal law; CM is only a limiting case in a world governed by Quantum Mechanics, according to these. Other scientists would look for a Unified Field Theory or General Theory of Relativity which would reconcile the conflict between the two sets of laws.

As I was musing on these questions sitting in an international symposium on The Theoretical Foundation of Modern Physics (University of Joensuu, Finland, August 6-8, 1987) and listening to such savants as David Bohm and Carl Friedrich von Weizsaecker, I wondered. Would these equations of a GTR or UFT be forthcoming in my life-time? If we finally get the equations which connect all the weak and strong forces that hold our universe together and make it go as it does, would the fundamental questions about the nature of reality then become answerable?

At the moment we have some fairly insurmountable obstacles to overcome. For example, unlike the other three, i.e. electro-magnetic, weak and strong forces, gravity seems to arise from the cosmic curvature—not from any dynamic force, though its effects (like water flow) can be converted into other forces. May be the cosmic curvature (as also its consequence, gravity) is a product of the Fall! And maybe only we who inhabit this universe experience it! The other obstacle is that we cannot get rid of this basic dualism between Force and Field. What is a field where there is no space? Is the force really distinguishable from its field?

David Bohm tells me that the whole Cosmos is governed by a wide and complex set of laws, and that what appears like a conflict between QM and CM will be resolved only when we discover the nature of the "implicate order" of the Universe.

There are more laws to be discovered—besides CM and QM. The over-all universe, in classical wisdom, is a subtle, unmanifest (*avyakṛta* or *avyakta* in Sanskrit) system of increasingly dynamic energy waves. The Unmanifest reveals only some of its dimensions in the Manifest world. There are many dimensions not yet manifest (to us). When these are known, the classically paradoxical behaviour of particles (undetermined position or momentum) in the two-slit or Einstein-Podolski-Rosew experiment will be resolved—says Bohm.

“That is a Hidden Variable hypothesis, and until the variable is identified, the scientific community cannot accept such a vague hypothesis”, say other scientists, criticizing David Bohm. Bohm seems to be a firm believer in Causality, despite all of Jung’s and Pauli’s arguments against it. Maybe science has to do some homework in consultation with philosophers and try to specify why they insist on causality as the only satisfactory explanation, why scientists find notions like “freedom” (indeterminacy) and “purpose” (directedness towards more effective and evolved forms) so uninviting.

Meanwhile Christian theology has to be very careful not to fall into the trap of an exclusively socio-economic interpretation of the consequences of the Incarnation, limiting those consequences to historical time. Which means rewriting most of recent theology.

[P.G]

RESOURCE SHARING SYSTEM

Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Osthathios

God is not an island. Nature is not an island. Man is not an island. God is love and He shares love in Trinity in all eternity. He created all things visible and invisible to express his ontological nature of his limitless love (agape), He created the Heaven and the earth for mutual sharing of resources. There will be no green leaves on the face of the earth if the sun does not share its light with the earth. There will be no clouds in the sky if the ocean does not share its water as vapour to be carried by the wind. Mutuality and reciprocity are in the very stuff of existence. The carbon dioxide we breathe out is used by the plants to prepare its food and to give us the oxygen we need. The cow-dung that the cow does not need is necessary for the plants to grow and to give food for animals and humanity. Even the poison of snakes is necessary for medicine. Violent cyclone is the result of vacuum on the one side and pressure on the other, which is a paradigm of poverty, plenty and war.

(i) Trinitarian Love, the Ultimate Model of Sharing :

God has no part or passion. He is not divisible. His sharing of love is total, unconditional, self-giving. The paradox of God is that the distinctions are real and equality is real. The Father alone begets eternally, the Son alone is begotten eternally and the Holy Spirit alone proceeds eternally and these distinctions do not nullify unity or equality. The doctrine of *perichoresis* (circumincession) is to show that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are not three water-tight compartments. The Father's Creation was through the Logos and the Spirit, and the Son's redemptive act was through the Spirit for fulfilling the Father's will and the Spirit's life-giving work for consummation is to fulfill the Father's purpose. When we say that God is a person, we are not projecting our two eyes and one nose and

other organs to God, quantitatively or physically, but qualitatively and spiritually. God is not anthropomorphic or in the form of man. Let, due to the image of God, the freedom, love and holiness of God, with which we are created, we can pray to God, listen to God and communicate with Him. (Femininists would say 'with her' and I have no quarrel with them for God is beyond sexual distinctions. Sex is in animals also, but personality is not in animals). Personality is the capability of infinite participation and infinite individualization, which is not in sub-human species, (Read Paul Tillich). God is *The Person* for He can participate infinitely and eternally in Himself, but I am *a person* and you are *a person* and our participation is infinite only in potentiality and finite in actuality. Only Christ, among all Jews, could say "I and the Father are one" for He was very God of very God and very man of very man. We can only participate with God and become divine, but cannot become God. Our participation starts in history and goes on to eternity 'form now to ages and ages' hence we are both finite and infinite and not infinite alone as God. Our participation with nature and humanity is finite, but that with God is infinite. The uniqueness of the doctrine of Trinity is that it goes into the root of the epoch-making statement, 'GOD IS LOVE'. It includes the unity of *Advaita* and the pluralism of *Trimurthi* in the paradoxical and yet profound statement that God is Triune participation and individuality in all eternity.

The co-equality, co-eternity and co-essentiality of the Triune God is the far-off event to which the whole creation is moving as well as the principle of justice and peace infringing in history when injustice and war threaten the very existence of humanity and nature. God is not a Monad into which every bit of life on earth is to emerge ultimately to make love impossible. The sharing fellowship (*koinonia*) of God is the Model in whose Pattern we must share justly as love shares in a family. Love of Father, Mother and Child in a family is not 120 degrees each, but 360 degrees each as Love is indivisible like God. Of course, in this fallen world this perfection of love is not practised in any family and that is why we have to worship the Model Triune God to become perfect like Him in our love and sharing. God's sharing is infinite and wholistic and we

worship and adore Him to become capable of increasing love and sharing without limiting ourselves in narrow domestic walls of our own. Exclusive monotheism will create communalism, self-centredness and intolerance whereas inclusive monotheism will widen our outlook, deepen our sharing and give us a universal outlook. No one is outside the domain of Trinity. Advaitins and polytheists and all religionists and non-religionists are created by the Trinue God and He shares His love with all of His creation. Muslim friends who find it difficult to understand the profundity of Trinity due to the bad example and inadequate teaching of Christians, are our brothers and sisters as they are also created by the same Trinity. They, while holding on to Allah alone as God, do not hesitate to give infallibility to the Holy Quran and finality to Mohammed. They are thereby agreeing indirectly that Allah alone is not infallible and final and seeing the need of plurality. Thus Trinitarian love is all-inclusive and humanity of all ages as well as the nature God created are being loved and supported by the God of all, whose sharing love knows no bounds. "He makes his Sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Mt. 5:45).

(ii) *Resource Sharing Nature :*

The Creation Story in Genesis 1 and 2 are not a scientific account of the origin of the universe. Scientific account is to be given by science and not by the Bible which was written to reveal the Ultimate who, final purpose and theology which cannot be deciphered or discovered by science. Those who take the Bible as a text-book of Biology or Botany or Physics are bringing down the Scripture of Eternal worth to a timley interpretation of Science. In the Genesis account we note :

- Elohim of Gen 1 and Jehovah of Gen 2 are one God
- In both the accounts of Creation, God is the sole Creator and Owner.
- Heaven and earth are created together to share resources to each other.
- The earth brought forth vegetation 'each according to its kind' to share.

- Firmament is added with two great lights, the one greater light to rule the day and the lesser lights to rule the night. (Saints and we).
- Living creators are created to be fruitful and multiply by sharing.
- ‘Male and female He created them’ to share love and multiply for others.
- ‘And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good’ This means that God did not create Satan, who through the Serpent tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit and to share sin with Adam.
- “There was evening and there was morning” each day, even before Sun was created. This cycle indicated the night of Satan and the Light of Logos. Christ the Logos Incarnate will finally bind Satan and make him important as before creation.

The above points can be elaborated, though it is impossible in such a brief article. In the second story of creation, which is actually earlier as it is from the Jehovistic document, “the Lord God formed man out of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.” (2:7). This shows that man is man by sharing the material dust and the spiritual breath. Later it is added that “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him” (2:18). Man could not be happy by sharing with the subhuman species and by naming them and controlling them. Man is not an island and he needs woman to share love fully. Personality does not grow without sharing with other personalities. Kamala the wolf child could not develop personality by sharing with wolves and animals and nature alone. Human beings want to love and to be loved and to share love together in a social existence. Families, monasteries, ashrams etc. give such opportunities to share.

Adam and Eve were not given the ownership of either the Garden of Eden or the earth to which they were expelled. His allotted duty in the Garden was one of stewardship, ‘to till it and to keep it’. (2:15). The first sin was in acting like an

owner by believing in the words of Satan and plucking the fruit of the forbidden tree, which was the mark of God's ownership. The first temptation was to disobey God and enjoy the fruit for oneself and thus act arrogantly, selfishly and lustily. Even the sinner shares, though it is the forbidden fruit. Those who share liquor, drugs, superstitions and luxury which makes others also sinners are involved in the poison-sharing, death-sharing fallen system of the fallen world. As long as Adam and Eve were enjoying the evening walk in the cool of the day with God and sharing the God-given fruits of the Garden, they were enjoying life like the angels. The cause of the fall was fellowship with Satan instead of with God. Bad company spoils many a saint even today.

Rev. Dr. K.C. Joseph, in his speech at Alwaye Fellowship House on 11-9-'87 compared the influence of the late lamented saintly K.C. Chacko to Newton's First Law of Motion. "The property of inertia is that all bodies will continue without change in a state of rest or of motion as a constant velocity in a straight line unless and until an external force compels change. This law of inertia seems to operate in spiritual matters also". (*Church Weekly*, Sept. 4, '87, Alwaye). The influence of great men and women of God speed up sharing of good things and that of bad company speeds up sharing in sin that will lead to premature death.

(iii) *Sharing Nature and Selfish Humanity :*

Though the animals have the instincts of self, sex and herd, they are for their self-preservation as a species, but human selfishness is worse than that of animals. The cow does not say that its milk is only for its calf, neither does the buffalo-mother or the she-goat. When a crow sees a carcass, it makes a special sound to inform fellow crows about the prey that they can all enjoy it. The ants assemble themselves into a cluster and flow down the river to save the species in solidarity by an intimate sharing fellowship. All the fruit-bearing trees exist for us and bears fruits for us, feeding on the wastes we discard. All the corn-fields share their corn and stalk for humanity at large. We cannot live for a day without sharing the water, air, sun-

light, tea, coffee, food and everything else that the nature gives us in abundance. But what do we do? We destroy the forests, cut-down the precious trees, contaminate fresh air, spoil the atmosphere, give all our wealth to our children, live luxuriously when our own kith and kin live in slums and neighbourhood in intolerable misery. When we erect palatial buildings on spacious compounds with barely anybody to live in it, Bombay's 38% and Calcutta's 42% live in slums. Their plight has to be seen to be believed. They have no closet or any place to answer the calls of nature. *Indian Express Magazine* of Oct. 4, '87 gives a picture of the dismal story of slum dwellers who are many millions in India. UN has asked all nations to build shelter for the homeless before 2000 A.D. but the homeless will increase by that time due to our unwillingness to share land, money and materials for the poor. 1987 was the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (IYSH), but the houses that are built for the few rich consume more cement and building materials than the total quantity used for the millions of poor.

When nature has a resource sharing system, Capitalism has a resource exploiting system and resource increasing and accumulating system without just sharing of resources. We do not realize that "poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere." We are not ready to live simply that others may simply live. We want to share the cake and also to keep it. We are taught that selfishness is the only motivation to work and that profit motive of Capitalism is a good incentive for better production. Every body is now looking for an alternative to Capitalism and Communism, some kind of a Responsible Sharing Society, where by we can produce more and share justly for the benefit of all.

(iv) *Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation* : (JPIC)

WCC has many departments and slogans aimed at awareness-building. The earlier study was on Just, Participatory and Sustainable society. (JPSS). The same study is now carried on with the above title as the integrity of creation is in danger due to the possible and impending nuclear war and unjustifiable use of resources for the types of warheads which, if used will

destroy the whole of creation with no victor on any side. Star wars are not going to create a safe war-free zone in America according to the opinion of expert scientists in USA itself and so the Research may be turned to some new way of destruction calling it Defense. Why do nations prepare for war and spend one trillion dollars a year for perparing for war? Mutual suspicion is due to lack of sharing the secrets in armamanet race. Justice is in sharing time, talents and resources for God's children everywhere as they are God's gifts for all His children. "Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; justice and peace will kiss each other. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground and justice will look down from the sky. Yea the Lord will give what is good, and our Land will yield its increase" (Ps. 85 : 10-12). Justice precedes peace. Sharing proceeds from love. Faithfulness and mutual trust are ways of stopping war and waging peace. The increase that the Lord gives is not to be enjoyed by those in whose hands they are placed, but shared to the neediest.

We know that the North is exploiting the South through unjust trade, selfish aid, exploiting loans, Multi or Trans National Corporations, and by selling of armaments and manufactured goods and medicines for huge prices. Is there any justice in the apartheid of South Africa or the Caste system of india or the race distinctions in many countries? The price of gold of the gold mines of South Africa is used to keep the natives in subjection by the white dominant 20% exploiting race hence, just sharing has to take place locally, nationally and internationally for peace and the integrity of God's creation and its benefits for all of humanity.

Zwignlio Dias of Brazil who spoke at JPIC Conference at Clion rightly identified six factors which are worth quoting :

1. "rapid population growth : before the year 2000, eighty percent of world's population will be in the countries of the Third World.
2. 'transnationalization of the economy-reflected in the foreign debt crisis which deprives Third World nations of their right of self-determination.
3. loss of land by the poor and runaway urbanization.

4. militarization : political and economic decisions are made in terms of interests on 'law and order' and consequent violation of human rights.
5. destruction of nature especially by deforestation.
6. destruction comes from the North : "the basic contradiction of our time", Dias said is between the rich, exploiting North and the poor, exploited South" *One World*, WCC, Geneva, May 1987.-p.16.

What is the remedy? Kenotic Christology shows the model that Churches, religions, ideologies and nations must pursue. Dispensing with our luxuries and comforts will not be sufficient. Identification with the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized is indispensable. Sharing of Resources should pinch upon as in such a way that we feel the pain of the pained in our marrow and being.

(v) *Called to be Neighbours or Called to be one family?*

This writer had the privilege to be a participant of the World Consultation of CICARWS (Commission on Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service) at Larnaca, Cyprus Nov. 1986 where the theme was 'Diakonia 2000, Called to be Neighbours' We from the Third World wanted the theme to be changed to "Called to be Brothers and Sisters" but our plea was not heard. In the Larnaca Declaration, however, the following sentences were included." God's kingdom is one of Trinitarian sharing of love. God alone has ultimate ownership of matter and energy. God's spiritual and material resources belong to all people and all must have a say in their use "(Read the whole Declaration from *NCC Review* of March, '87). CICARWS is having another consultation in Spain this year on the Ecumenical Sharing of Resources. (ESR). This will follow up the thinking of Glion 1982 and Larnaca 1986. Sharing of resources and personnel has to increase. Aubert van Deek, who is the secretary of ESR has written of 'sharing with empty hands.' "If we can put our gifts on the altar before approaching one another we have our hands free to greet each other. "(ibid.p. 157). Sharing is no more a one way traffic. CWME speaks of partnership in

mission. Human resources from the developing nations are already enriching the developed. This brain drain from the two-third world is also a sharing of personnel. Unfortunately the scientists from the third world are not returning to their own countries, but grazing in green pastures to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. The gulf between the Research opportunities of the rich (97.3%) and of the poor countries (2.7%) is so vast that the researchers in the North do not want to come to the South and waste their precious time and energy. This is a vile circle. If ESR is to be fruitful, research opportunities must increase radically in the South. The scientists from the North must take risk and return to their native countries with as much know-how as they control and change the unjust structure of to-day.

(vi) *Sharing of Basic Ecclesial Communities in Latin America :*

Two of the worst slum cities in the world, next to Calcutta and Bombay are in Latin America, viz Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. (The four others are Cairo, Lagos, Bangkok and Dhaka). These cities also have basic ecclesial communities, with sharing life and prayer, sharing of material goods, sharing the Bible and sharing hopes and struggles (ibid pp 166-172). Julio de Santa Ana, former Director of CWME is now on the staff of the Ecumenical Centre in Sao Paulo. To describe the sincerity of the sharing of many thousand LECs in Brazil and sees in them the sign of the Kingdom more than among the rich who do not share. To quote him, "The tradition of the Christian church teaches us that unity, catholicity and apostolicity are all marks of the being of the Church. One should also add, the ability of sharing"(p. 171).

Is sharing a burden or a joy? Where there is real love, sharing is a real joy. Parents share everything with their children and enjoy it tremendously. The basic Communities consider each other as members of the same family and so they share their meagre resources to give job to the jobless. As they live in solidarity, they share their hopes and fears, joy and sorrow, time and resources. Arch Bishop Helder Camera has closed the Jesuit College for the rich and is in solidarity with

the basic Communities and trying to educate the poor and illiterate people. The conclusion of Julio's article is as follows: "My experience with the Basic Ecclesial Communities convinces me that this experience of sharing is not limited to the early Christian community in Jerusalem. Here in Sao Paulo the poor are ahead of us on the way to the kingdom. They are our evangelists. "(p. 172). In India, can the Dalits and all other oppressed join together without distinction of caste, creed and colour and create basic sharing communities and start political conscientization with spiritual awakening?

(vii) *From Exploitation to Just and Loving Sharing:*

Till we die, we all share. Prayer is mutual sharing with God by praying to Him for blessings and waiting upon Him for His will and acting accordingly. Every moment of our life is sharing by breathing in and breathing out. The heart-beat means pumping out purified blood through arteries and pumping in impure blood through veins. The good food that we eat is good for us and the stool and urine we excrete are good for the plants. God has created the universe, the plants, animals and humanity for just sharing. The tragedy of our time is what R.A. Tawney called the Acquisitive Society. As Dr. C.T. Kurien points out, "in our tiny planet less than a fifth of its inhabitants have close to 65 percent of the annual produce available to them, while at the other end close to a third of its inhabitants have only less than five percent. In fact the vast produce potential that has become available during the (20th) century has gone to the benefit of those who were already well-to-do and so the gulf between the affluent and the poor has increased, and rather sharply, as we move towards its last few years" (*N.C.C. Review*, May 1987, p. 275f). This kind of exploitation must end.

There is no easy solution as man or woman is basically selfish. Hence, the Constitution of India must be amended in such a way that black money cannot be made while by purchase of land or by the erection of huge private houses. A new motivation for hard work has to be evolved as in China, namely nation building. Religions must teach that it is sin to be rich in a poor world. Government must act for a just, sharing

society by making luxurious life-style impossible till basic needs of all are met. Equal wages for different quantity of work as in the parable in Mathew 20 must precede the 5,2,1 talents parable of Mathew 25. If love would not bring about voluntary sharing for a just society, law must bring it about with a vengeance for without just sharing we will die.

St. Paul indicates that sharing of food is a pre-requisite for sharing in the Holy Eucharist (I Cor. 11). We must share the Gospel with the whole of humanity and move speedily to the life-style of the early ecclessal *koinonia*.

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN A MULTI-FAITH SOCIETY

By
S. J. Samartha

With the rise of fundamentalism and increasing politicisation of religions a sense of urgency enters into any discussion of the subject today. Although the context of this meeting is global the focus of this paper is on the Indian situation. The reasons for this should be obvious. India has been a multi-religious country for many centuries and continues to be so even to this day in spite of the growing influence of science and technology and secular ideologies. Therefore the implications of this discussion are very likely to spill over to other areas of the world as well. The role of religions in India is ambiguous. Religions have provided visions, values and a sense of identity to different communities of people. Religions have also supported unjust and oppressive social structures, upheld superstitious practices that go against human values, and have been an unending source of conflicts in society. There is hardly a single matter that touches public life in India which, sooner or later, does not become a "religious" issue. Why is this so? To formulate the right questions relating to this matter is as difficult, if not more, than analysing the situation and indicating possible lines of answer. But the matter is so urgent, and human life so precious, that questions must be asked and answers suggested even though we may all be groping in the dark. Are religions really to blame in the matter of communal

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conflicts? What role do religious communities have in a secular democratic state? Has the secular state provided creative space for different religions to make their contribution to under-gird the value basis of our nation-in-the-making? How can people of different religious persuasions live and work together for common human purposes in a multi-religious society without compromising their respective commitments?

I

The title of this paper which was given to me suggests that "religions" and "faiths" are used as synonyms. A "multi-faith" society probably means a "multi-religious" society. It is only in the English language that the word "faith" may be used in the plural to indicate "religions". It is not the purpose of this paper to enter into any academic discussion on the definition of these terms, but perhaps it should be noted that historians of religion often make a distinction between the two. A well-known scholar states that faith is "a quiet confidence and joy which enables one to feel at home in the universe, and to find meaning in the world and in one's own life, a meaning that is profound and ultimate, and is stable no matter what may happen to oneself at the level of immediate event. Men and women of this kind of faith face catastrophe and confusion, affluence and sorrow, unperturbed; face opportunity with conviction and drive; and face others with a cheerful charity".¹ In a religiously plural society why do religious communities often fail to look at each other at least with charity if not with cheerfulness?

Faith is a response to the mystery of the Divine or Truth or Ultimate Reality. It has to do with visions and values. Faith is the substance of religion and precedes it. Faith can live without religion, but religion cannot exist without faith. It is the combination of the two that gives identity to a community of people and creates tradition, but in doing so, also creates problems and difficulties in a multi-religious society. Religion seeks to enshrine and express faith in dogmas and doctrines,

¹Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Faith and Belief*, Princeton University Press, 1979, p. 12.

rituals, symbols and liturgy, in patterns of meaning, codes of conduct and structures of society. And in doing so, it may distort faith and obscure the original vision. There are enough examples of this in the history of religions. Criticising the manner in which a religious community lives in the world, particularly in relation to other religious communities, does not necessarily mean rejecting the intensity of vision and the depth of commitment rooted in faith. To Christians, for example, Jesus before Christianity may be more important than Christianity after Jesus.

A religious community gives people a sense of identity and belonging through shared faith, tradition and history. It helps individuals to overcome feelings of anxiety, separateness and terror. Loneliness and companionship are marks of human predicament. When one is lonely there is a longing for companionship. When there is too much company one desires to be alone. Loneliness can bring despair, community can result in oppression. A religious community which enshrines faith and demands ultimate commitment helps individuals to overcome the tension between the two. Loneliness and companionship are held together in the depths of God's being. Religious communities and their specific identities are therefore important to all human beings seeking to make sense of the relation between humanity, nature and God.

When religious communities themselves become oppressive and are intolerant of new insights into the mystery of Truth they betray the original faith. In a recent article Swami Agnivesh remarks that "the more a religion gets formalised, institutionalised and hierarchically structured, the more it gets alienated from its own original spirit of struggle against oppression and domination".² In such cases faith has a critical function to perform within a religious community. It provides criteria and norms to criticise religious distortions. To do so, faith has to break loose from its captivity to religious ideology. Faith is not just an interior attitude, but also leads to a mode of

²Swami Agnivesh, "Vedic Socialism" in *Seminar*, No. 339, New Delhi, Nov. 1987, p. 18.

action and a way of living in society. It has a transcendent dimension that reaches beyond human hopes and institutions, and so provides criteria and courage to be critical of ideological distortions of religion in society.

In multi-religious societies therefore the presence of different religious identities should be regarded not as a bump to be flattened on the road to unity or an obstacle to be overcome in the interest of one particular religion conquering others. In the long history of religions, Christianity and Islam have tried to impose their particular brand of singularity on others, but have failed to do so. Within established religions constant attempts have been made to suppress "sects". They too have failed. The grudging recognition, if not the joyful acceptance of this plurality in the world today, is a result of this failure. The theological and ethical consequences of this perception have yet to be considered carefully. One of the preconditions for harmony in the relationship between different religious communities should be the acceptance of plurality not as an obstacle to be overcome but an opportunity to be accepted. May be plurality belongs to the structure of reality.

In view of all this perhaps one should recognise the values of religious plurality instead of constantly emphasising its difficulties. It provides spiritual resources for particular communities to survive and retain their identities. The new nations that have emerged in history after the dismantling of colonialism all try to build their self-respect and dignity on the basis of their particular religious and cultural values. Not just on the global level but also within multi-religious societies in particular countries, different communities affirm their identities on the basis of their religious and cultural resources. Further, as Rajni Kothari points out, a plurality of religions, cultures, languages and ethnic groups may be a guarantee against fascism in a multi-religious society because it would resist the imposition of any "one and only" religion or ideology on all people.³ At

³Rajni Kothari and Shiv Vishwanathan, "Moving out of 1984 : A Critical Review of Major Events" in *Mainstream Annual*, 1984 No. 305, January 1985, p. 30.

the moment the plurality of religions, languages, regions and castes appears to be a hindrance to national integration in India. But is plurality the only cause of these difficulties or has the secular state failed to provide creative space for different religions to make their specific contribution to the pool of values to undergird the life of the nation?

There is a further point to be noted. Any notion that in a pluralistic society just one religion has the *only* answer to all the problems of human life at all times and in all cultures is doubtful whatever be the vehemence with which such a notion is propagated. Plurality of religions, therefore, introduces an element of choice when faced with the profound perplexities of life understood differently by people in different cultures. Alternative visions of life offer different possibilities of meaning and direction to human life. Moreover, in a pluralistic situation the possibilities of mutual criticism and mutual enrichment are greater than in a mono-religious situation.

This does not mean an uncritical glorification of plurality. Surely, a critical principle has to be developed lest people flounder in a sea of relativism. While in former years this critical principle was understood by each religious community as *over against* others today it has to be developed in *relation* to neighbours of other communities. This, of course, is yet to happen, but unless a beginning is made religious identities will always be a source of tension and conflict.

The positive values of plurality however, cannot mitigate the horrors of communal riots. The wounds they inflict on society take generations to heal, if they heal at all. Unfortunately, in India since independence (1947), the incidence of communal conflicts and violence is growing.⁴ To this must be

⁴Recent studies show that in the fifties there were 381 incidents with 153 fatalities, in the sixties 2689 with 3246 killed, and in the seventies a slight decrease with 2608 incidents and 1108 deaths. But during the eighties, during the first five years alone (including the 1984 riots after the assassination of the then prime minister), there were 2771 riots with 2772 people killed. P. R. Rajgopal, *Communal Violence in India*, Uppal Publishing House, New Delhi 1987 quoted in Book Review, Vol. IX, No. 5, New Delhi, Sept/Oct. 1987, p. 10.

added the enormous destruction of property, the immense suffering caused to families of those killed, and the seeds of suspicion, hatred and revenge sown in the hearts of people.

One must be careful however not to blame religions alone for these troubles. Studies by sociologists, political scientists, economists and theologians bring out the fact that to single out "religions" as the only cause of these conflicts is to oversimplify a higher complex matter. It is pointed out that all too often, these are *secular* riots in which religions are cunningly used for political or economic purposes.⁵ Bipan Chandra points out that communalism is an ideology that should be fought at every level. He draws attention to three stages in the growth of communal ideology in India.⁶ First, a feeling is promoted that people who follow the same religion have not only *common* religious beliefs, but also *common* economic, political and cultural interests. From this arises the ideology of a religion-based community. In the second stage, it is emphasised that the secular interests, that is, the political, economic, social, and cultural interests, of one religious community are *different* from those of another religious community. This quickly leads to the third stage when people are made to believe that these interests are not only different between different religious communities, but are also *antagonistic* to each other.

Over the years different elements that constitute this ideology have been floating around in the country, becoming hardened beliefs through the inner logic of repeated communal riots escalating through violence. Communalism cannot be suppressed by force but has to be fought against in the realm of ideas. This is because the roots of this ideology are to be found not just among religious fanatics, but also in the minds of secular intellectuals. Therefore, remarks Bipan Chandra, the struggle against communal ideology has to be fought 'not only

⁵ There are quite a few studies on this matter. See Bipan Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1984; Asghar Ali Engineer, "Bombay-Bhiwandi Riots in National Political Perspective" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XIX, No. 29, July 21, 1984, pp. 1134 ff.

⁶ Bipan Chandra, "Communalism: The Way Out" in *Mainstream*, Nehru Special Number, Vol. XXIV, No. 38, May 24, 1986, pp. 11 ff.

with the help of intellectuals, but first of all among the intellectuals”⁷. This is not to underestimate the fanatic influence of religion in the matter of communal conflicts but to point out that ideological factors certainly are mixed up with the religious in provoking such conflicts.

In recent years, particularly after 1984, it is the politicisation of religions that has become a crucial factor in the increase of communal feelings and violence. Politicisation of religions takes place when leaders of political parties or of the State or of particular communities remain silent when they ought to speak out against superstitious or barbaric acts in the name of religion or incite people over minor incidents where they ought to remain silent. Short term electoral gains have tragically led many politicians to remain silent when human rights, particularly those of women, are violated. There are so many examples of this in recent years that it is unnecessary to single out any one.⁸ In a multi-religious society the politicisation of religions is not only an obstacle to national integration but is also harmful to the genuine values of all religions. A recent workshop makes the following observation on this matter. “Political use of religion divests it of its spiritual content, which would essentially expand the sympathies and human compassion to encompass the entire creation. Politicisation makes it into a tool of distinction, setting the followers of one religion from and in confrontation with other religious faiths. Thus, the religious community is sought to be made into a political community. That is why the demand for separation of religion from politics. While there should be full freedom to preach and practise religion, individually as well as in groups, this freedom cannot be extended to identify a religious entity with political entity”.⁹

The connection between religion, culture and nationalism

⁷*Ibid*, p. 12.

⁸See “The Angry Hindu”, articles by Kuldip Kumar, Patralekha Chatterji et. al. in *Sunday*, Calcutta, 25-31 Oct. 1987, pp. 25 ff; “Conspicuous Conspiracy” article by Madhumata Majumdar on Sati in *The Week*, Nov. 8-14, 1987, p. 5.

⁹Report on the Workshop, in *Mainstream*, on How to Meet the Communal Challenge, New Delhi, August 1-2, 1987, p. 16-17.

is another factor in communal conflicts. The notion that each religion has a separate culture of its own, and that each religious culture has the potential identity of a nation has led to the evolution of a communal consciousness. This has gradually led to the consolidation of a particular religious community as a political identity leading to the demand for separate electorates. From this the road to a nation-state based on religious identity is not far. "Never before was communal consciousness so keen, so assertive, nay so aggressive, as within the last fifty years of British rule", remarks Krishnan Kant. "The concept of composite culture born of multi-religious identities developed into multi-religious nationalisms. In a democratic system where we have adult franchise, multi-religious nationalisms build up mutual confrontation leading to domination of majority nationalism or chauvinism".¹⁰

But the relationship between religion, culture, nation and state are far more complex than the theory of "composite culture". People of different religious persuasions may share in the same culture values, and people who belong to the same religious community may be culturally different. In spite of the religious plurality of India for a few thousand years Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and later on, Sikhs share basically the same cultural values even though today the dalits and tribals opt out of it. Islam and Christianity, as religions that entered India from outside, were already allied to different cultures, but when one takes into account the fact that a large majority of these are "converts" who often retain the languages and customs they are used to, the notion that people of different religious communities have different cultures and therefore may even be considered separate "nations" requiring separate territory for expressing themselves, breaks down. People in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Nigeria share the same religion, but are culturally different. There are Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland, the Philippines, France and in Latin American countries but culturally they are different. At a time when we as an ancient civilisation are still a nation-in-the-making it is neces-

¹⁰Krishnan Kant, "Nationalism or Composite Culture" in *Mainstream* Sept. 5, 1987, New Delhi, p. 5.

sary to recognise that religion and culture are not synonymous and that it is possible for people of different religious communities within a nation to share in basic cultural values.

III

This leads to the question of the role of different religious communities in a state with a multi-religious society. One should recognise that the character of the state and the degree of plurality differ in different countries. Some countries have been multi-religious for many centuries. In some, plurality is a more recent phenomenon, rather reluctantly accepted by the majority community. In Western countries Christians are in a majority with "pockets" of other religious communities sharing the larger life of the nation. In countries of Asia, with the exception of the Philippines, people of other religions form the majority, for example, Hindus in India, Muslims in Pakistan and Buddhists in Sri Lanka and Thailand.

So too the political character of the states in the world is different. Some are secular and, after many years of struggle, have succeeded in keeping state and religion separate. Some are theocratic where religious belief determines the character of the state and the attitude towards religious minorities. Indonesia is based on the *pantasila* principles. It is necessary to recognise this complexity and variety lest people offer simplistic religious solutions to complex political problems. But whatever be the political complexion of the state and the degree of plurality in multi-religious societies unless there is religious freedom and creative space people of different communities cannot, as citizens, make their specific contribution to the larger life of the nation.

There are at least three areas where religions can make significant contributions to the life of the nation. One is through exercising what may be described as a "prophetic-critical" function in society. The other is to encourage the emergence of new communities of concerned individuals cutting across visible religious boundaries who, with courage and conviction, can work for fuller life in society. And the third is to draw attention to a transcendent centre that serves both as the source of

all values and the norm to judge all human conduct, personal or public. Whether this is called God or *Sat* or *Dharma* or Ultimate Reality is less important than for all religious communities to point to a sacred symbol that transcends loyalty to one's own religion, tribe, caste or language. Secularism empties life of this content, faith recognises and accepts it.

The negative role of religions has been stressed so much and indeed with good reasons that the positive function of religions in society is almost wholly forgotten. To say that politics and religion should be kept separate is understandable, especially at a time like ours. But what it really should mean is that politicians should not use religions for short-term political ends, and religious leaders should not use politicians for narrow communal gains. But surely, every religion has a social and public dimension. To say that religion should be a "private" affair is to misunderstand both religion and politics. Justice, as a social virtue, has religious roots. When religious leaders became corrupt, when kings forgot to be just, and when the powerful exploited the poor, individuals, at great risk to themselves, have publicly protested against them in the name of religion. There are enough examples of this not just in the Judeo-Christian-Western tradition, but also in Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim and Sikh histories. There are liberative streams, revolutionary urges and prophetic voices in the history of every religious community.

The prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures, and Jesus Christ himself, criticised corruption and called for the cleansing of public life. The leaders of Hindu reform movements like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and many others were profoundly religious with a public conscience. The resources for the struggle against such practices as *Sati*, untouchability and child-marriage were not just secular, but also deeply religious. Buddhism has a long history of rebellion against all kinds of oppression and corruption in public life. The *maha-Karuna citta* of the Buddha was not a private affair; it extended to all life, including the animal. Throughout the history of Islam there are many examples of revolts against all kinds of oppression and

these were born out of religious imperatives. Sikh gurus have become martyrs opposing the oppression of their Hindu brethren. With such powerful examples in the history of every religious community genuinely religious people should not abandon their critical function in society. They should avoid fanaticism and resist "secular" leaders from giving them an inferior political consciousness. The time has come for people of different religious persuasions to come together to discover ways and means of exercising their critical function to cleanse political life of its evils and to shape rules for public morality.¹¹

There are already groups of people, both secular and religious, who have joined together against the evils of communalism, political corruption, and social and economic oppression. Some of them are rejected by their own communities of faith. There are instances when Hindus have rescued Muslims in danger of death during communal riots and Muslims coming to the help of Hindus caught in similar situations. There are Hindu mothers who have tried to save Sikh boys from being killed and Sikh families sheltering threatened Hindus. Such acts of compassion, and defiance against religious fanaticism, cannot be done without courage and a profound faith in human life. A new vocabulary of communication needs to be developed so that people of different communities can genuinely converse with each other on deeper matters of faith and so build new communities that cut across the walls of separation.

In an age dominated by science and secularism one of the tasks of genuinely religious people is to draw attention to the Mystery of transcendence, a centre of values, a source of meaning, an object of loyalty beyond the smaller loyalties to one's particular caste, or language or religion. Whatever be

¹¹For a discussion on the historical role of religions in their struggle against oppression see Aloysius Pieris, "The Place of Non-Christian Religions and Cultures in the Evolution of Third World Theology" in the *Bulletin* of the Commission on Theological Concerns, Christian Conference of Asia, Vol. 3 No. 2, August 1982, pp. 43-61. This is a comprehensive and well documented study. See also S.J. Samartha, "Religious Imperatives and Social Concerns" in *Religion and Society*, Vol. XXX, Nos. 3 & 4, Sept./Dec 1983, pp. 109-114.

the manner in which faith responds to this Mystery, and expresses it in different cultural ways, this sense of the Beyond in our midst, of the Mystery that touches life at all points but is not confined to it, helps people to come together for common human purposes in society not just for pragmatic reasons, but deeper reasons of faith and commitment.

None of these functions can be exercised effectively without the spirit, the mood and the attitude of dialogue. Opening the gates of hospitality to neighbours of other faiths is far more urgent than strengthening the fences that separate religious communities from each other in a multi-religious society. There can be no true community unless strangers become friends and travellers become pilgrims on the road to the city of God.

RESTRUCTURING AND OPENESS IN THE USSR SIGNIFICANCE FOR ALL HUMANITY

Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios

To Indians, as well as to other non-Russians, the words are perplexing: *perestroika*, *glasnost*. Even when translated into English as "Restructuring" and "Openness", they do not mean much to most people.

And yet the Soviet experiment underlying these two concepts is one of enormous significance, not only to socialism in the USSR, but also to the future of humanity and to the course of history itself.

Socialism as a State system becomes this year 70 years old. It was a turbulent period of history which saw two world wars, the rise and fall of the League of Nations, the emergence of the United Nations, the era of decolonisation and at the same time the emergence of new forms of imperialism, neo-colonialism and sophisticated Capitalism.

Soviet leaders now freely admit that the path of socialist construction has not always been straight. On the one hand Soviet Party leadership is unanimous in the view that Trotsky was wrong. The idea of a permanent and universal revolution is rejected by all. The decision made by the party in the debate with Trotsky was to strengthen socialism in one country before trying to spread revolution thinly over all societies. The wisdom of the path chosen by the Party under Stalin's leadership in this regard has been shown by history. If the Soviet Union had not emerged as a strong and powerful state, capitalist states would have joined together to crush all socialist movements.

Stalin's great achievement in building a strong economy with high military capability during the rise of Nazi power and

after the second World War is still to be praised. But there was much that Stalin did which was unnecessary and inhuman, for example the personality cult and the psychological climate of secrecy, mistrust, and espionage that Stalin established in the Soviet Union.

The Capitalist media would have decried socialist construction in any case, since socialism is seen as the enemy of capitalism. But Stalin's excesses in fostering the personality cult and the mutual suspicion and mistrust among people gave ample material to socialism's enemies to generate a climate of anti-communist public opinion.

These undemocratic aspects of Stalinism has also had severe economic consequences. It may have been necessary at one time to have a strongly centralized administration, in order to fight the enemies of socialism. But socialism is essentially a democratic humanism, and where people lose initiative and creativity socialism cannot freely flourish. Undemocratic central control stifles initiative and creativity; it also makes it difficult for the workers to experience any real control over the product of their labour.

Soviet leadership now admits that there has been some alienation of the worker due to undemocratic centralism and the climate of mistrust created by too much regulation and control of the personal life and thought of individual persons. A culture of repression will thwart economic productivity on the one hand, and can introduce an element of fascism inside Socialism.

The present programme of *Perestroika* (reconstruction or restructuring) and *Glasnost* (openness in free discussion, in mutual trust, and in cultural creativity) is directed against these evils.

The pressure for military spending and militarisation of economy caused by the arms race and the arms trade fostered by capitalism, has had its effect on the Soviet economy also. It is difficult for any nation, socialist or capitalist, to bear this

burden of military expenditure which keeps growing. The stockmarket crash of October 1987 clearly shows that the capitalist economies which enjoyed a temporary boom through new jobs and new markets created by increased military budgets and increased arms trade, have to pay the price. It is the temporary boom that ended in the horrendous and world-wide crash in capitalist company stocks—amounting to a loss of something like three trillion dollars in world stock values.

Percentage-wise this crash was just as big as the last big crash in 1929 which initiated the world-wide depression at that time. It is a warning now that the collapse of the capitalist system as such cannot be too far in the future. Deficit budgetting and unproductive military spending, along with unrealistic credit and finance policies have led to the heightening of the capitalist crisis.

But the socialist economies have also been suffering inordinately by the pressure for military spending. If the socialist way of life is ultimately to triumph over the capitalist way, it is necessary that the standard of living in socialist economies has to rise. This is hardly possible so long as the pressure to spend on useless arms and armies keeps on growing.

Even to develop the necessary safe-guards against President Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative, (which can be understood only as part of a strategy for aggression against socialism), the socialist economies have to increase their production at a very high rate. The Soviet government and the CPSU do not plan to develop their own space-based nuclear umbrella, since that would be a foolish waste. What is needed is to disable the space-based weapons of the capitalist world. This should cost less than ten percent of what it costs to manufacture and deploy these space weapons. Even that ten percent, however, amounts to billions of dollars, and the Soviet economy has to make a heroic effort, like the one made for post-war reconstruction in order to be able to pay the bills.

This is why the question of raising the level of socialist gross domestic product has become a matter of life and death—

both to meet the pressures created by S.D.I. and to increase the standard of civilian consumption in the socialist economies. Both are necessary for the survival and ultimate triumph of socialism.

Among the constraints on economic production in the socialist countries the CPSU and its General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachov has isolated several factors. The two main constraints are

- (a) pressures for military spending and
- (b) the stifling of human creativity and responsibility by undemocratic centralism. These are the two targets that the CPSU programme wants to fight.

The only way to ease the pressure for military spending is disarmament and detente. Without tackling this problem forthrightly the major constraint on socialist development cannot be removed. That is why Mikhail Gorbachov has advanced so many realistic proposals not only for eliminating Intermediate range nuclear missiles altogether, for cutting the strategic nuclear arsenal by 50% as a first step to their elimination, and to reduce conventional forces and weapons, but also to create a new climate of mutual trust and co-operation in which a new system of comprehensive global security can be developed.

Disarmament, development and the establishment of a comprehensive system of global security—all three are inter-dependent and have to be fostered as three aspects of a single programme for humanity as a whole. This is a moral issue. It is a matter of seeing the vision of a new united, disarmed humanity working in scientific, technical and cultural collaboration to make life on this planet worthy of the dignity of human beings. Without such a vision, the three inter-connected aspects of the single programme cannot make any spectacular progress.

The CPSU is also convinced about the centrality of the “human factor” in fostering such a programme. We should deal with this human factor in both its economic and cultural aspects.

In the economy as well as in culture the two current emphasis are on (a) expansion and deepening of democracy and (b) the promotion of self-management in all social spheres. This is where *perestroika* and *glasnost* come in.

Self-administration by the people of the economy is a classical Marxist principle, which gathered dust during the Stalinist era of over-centralisation. It has now to be cleaned and refurbished. It was a mistake to condemn this principle of self-administration by the people as a revisionist fad.

Self-administration by the people is not in contradiction with centralised planning and control. These are mutually compatible and have to be held in dialectic tension. It is this dialectic aspect that the Stalinist era ignored, opting for the single pole of centralism.

Along with the principle of self-administration, there is the second principle of a fresh interpretation of property relations. Social or public property does not mean simply a state-owned and state-controlled no-man's land for the workers. Workers are co-owners of the means of production, and are directly responsible for the performance of an economic unit.

The new law passed by the Soviet Parliament in June 87 expressly states that the assets of an economic unit belong to its workers or personnel. This is a radical effort to move towards the more classical marxist view of property, which insists on harmonising the interests of the individual worker with the interests of the economy as a whole. What is good for the people as a whole should also be good for the individual worker, and when the two are not in conflict, it is good for socialism too. This is bold rethinking and restructuring, building on Lenin's dictum that genuine socialism is a system of civilized co-operatives.

In practice this means work-related wages and performance-related incentives based on the profit or loss of an economic unit as a whole, and the productivity of the individual worker. This of course is without prejudice to the social guaran-

tees of socialism-namely employment, housing, education, medical care and old-age pension to all workers.

The Market is now more realistically assessed. Market forces constitute one factor to be taken into account, but should not be allowed to dictate the relations of production. Just as there is a dialectic between self-management and central planning, there is also a dialectic between market forces and central planning, and the dialectic tension should not be given up in favour of one pole or the other.

MONASTICISM AS A WAY TO SPIRITUAL FREEDOM

By
Fr. Nicandros,* U.S.S.R.

Struggle for Inner Consciousness

Very often we consider our time atheistic. It is hardly true because in our time non-religious people are far from always having such definite convictions as atheism and prefer prejudice which is non-committal. It is very rare for a rational truth to become a truth of will and to realise itself as a truth of heart. But the truth without existential realisation becomes prejudice which may be changed at will. It seems to me therefore that the problem with the world lies not in the absence of faith but in the absence of the will to have a definite faith, which one can hardly call atheism.

Existentialism and psychoanalysis correctly indicate that the most dangerous sign of today is the lack of inner consciousness, a calculated evasion from any attempt to understand the truth of our own existence. Threatening with suffering and enticing with pleasure, evil cripples our souls but our compromise with sin, by making those who have the commandment : "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed" (Rom. 12:2), adapt themselves to the world of passions.

In his struggle against such compromises the monk finds help in obedience, chastity and non-acquisition. These vows are rooted in the advice given by our Saviour to those who seek perfection (Mt. 19:21), but they are not something additional or complementary to the Commandments. Their only *raison d'être* is to help us fully realise the freedom from this world and from sin that we are called to (Gal. 5:13), the freedom of pilgrims

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who have no lasting city here but seek the city which is to come (Heb. 13;14).

Influx of Young People in Monasteries

The monastic vows are the simplest and the most natural way of realising this freedom from compromise. It is the simplest but not the easiest one, of course. Every kind of freedom is difficult to achieve, but this radical freedom of monks may be the hardest to realise because it demands the deepest possible sincerity—quality which runs contrary to this world of compromises. May be this accounts for the great number of persons who want to become monks and nuns. Over the last three years more than 80 young people have taken monastic vows in our Holy Trinity-St. Sergius Laura, and ours is just one of the 19 monasteries and convents in the Soviet Union. Besides, we have many new candidates.

The younger generation everywhere has always been the generation of sincerity and desire to go all possible lengths to realise their convictions. In this sense, it is a generation of consistency. Youth seeks fulfilment, but to this end there is no way other than struggle against enslavement to the fear of suffering and the the striving after pleasure, which distort our nature.

Orthodox asceticism is a way of struggling for the restoration of human nature and freedom crippled by sin. Many Russian young people believe that it is in the monastery that they will be able to gain a rich ascetic experience of this struggle and to find a vivid example of its most consistent realisation. Moreover, in it they meet the spiritual tutors who will help them to find their own way of accomplishing the freedom that was given to us (Gal. 5:1).

This freedom however has been given only potentially, and it is our duty to actualise it in our lives in accordance with the commandments consistent with the inner laws of human nature. For us the way of obedience is the way of such actualisation of our nature and fostering of our freedom of which we are to

become worthy yet. This is a way up from a freedom of passionate arbitrariness to that of love and service—a glorious liberty of the children of God who are set free from the bondage (Rom. 8:2) of both passionate pleasure and suffering.

Service to the World

The only real foundation for such a freedom is love, through which a freedom *from* the world ceases to be a freedom *against* the world to become a freedom of service to the world. St. Seraphim of Sarov, a most venerated saint of the last century, said that the goal of Christian life is to seek the grace of the Holy Spirit, and if you acquire this spirit of peace, thousands around you will be saved. There is no personal salvation without affecting the whole body of the Church, and every personal salvation is salvation for all. If you light your soul like a new candle there will be more light for the whole Church and for all. Thus, if a monk wishes to help the world he has first to purify himself. The beginning of any fruitful work does not lie outside but inside us, and it is impossible to change the world without changing first our own spiritual life. If we wish to heal rather than to contaminate we should first cure ourselves (Lk. 4:23). It would be a first sign of our love for the neighbour.

Our true love for sinners (such as we are) is inseparable from hate for sin which lives in us and in our world and from the struggle against sin. It is true love, rather than just a sort of warm and kind feeling as the modern world often seems to believe. Such a view may be another reason why young people leave the world to retreat to the monastery. A young person seeks after absolute values worthy of serving and finds the Truth, Freedom and Beauty in Christ. He seeks to realise his ability to love and to find fulfilment in self-sacrificial love. But looking around him, he does not see the courage of being consistent in either love or hatred. For the modern world these are only casual feelings. And more often than not it is only among monks that he finds those who dare to love in a true way, forgetting their own selves. Thus he comes to the monastery so that through self-sacrificial love he may rid his abilities of the

distorting influence of egoism and realise to the fullest the gifts he was given by God. There he finds the courage to love, the power to hate and fight sin.

We often tend to forget that love is not just a feeling but the perfection of will seeking the good. However, there is no perfection without freedom. Only evil coerces whereas God never seeks slaves but wants to find in us his free friends (Jn. 15: 14-15) and loving children. The only gift which we can offer God and which he expects from us is our love, and love cannot be coerced, for in order to exist it must be free.

We often forget yet another thing. Christianity is not only a religion of loving will but also a religion of a courageous and strong will, a religion of achievement. We are warriors who are called to fight "against the spiritual hosts of wickedness" (Eph. 6:22). For "love is strong as death" (Song 8:6); it demands and gives courage and strength. Courage gives strength to our love, but courage without love is impertinence. Love gives purpose to courage and strength, but without them it is fragile and unable to achieve its purpose. A young person needs this harmony of all his aspirations more than anybody and he finds means of achieving it in the treasury of Orthodox asceticism cherished in monasteries.

Ascetism : Revelation of Beauty

Every Christian nation has its own ascetic gift, so has the Russian Church. Perhaps it is a live feeling of a well-balanced harmony of all human resources. The spiritual beauty of such a harmony is another attraction of our monasteries. It is here that a feeling of remarkable spiritual balance is fostered through one's everyday consulting a spiritually experienced monk and constant watching over every movement of one's reason, heart and will. The novice assimilates the tradition and, by implementing it in his everyday practice, preserves and transmits it to his successors by the vivid example of his life as a treasury of spiritual experience. During this process of collaboration with God and his spiritual instructor he participates in the restoration of God's image and likeness in himself. As both an icon and

icon painter he paints doing it not with dyes but with movements of his soul. His highest creative abilities are realised as he effects an icon painted with words and melodies of church chants frescoes and architectural forms, body language and prayer, with his whole life. This complex liturgical image revealed through uncreated divine energies and grace is the presence of the Heavenly Kingdom here on earth, the beauty imparted to creation by God. It is not accidental that in Orthodox tradition asceticism is described as the art of arts i.e. the art of revealing God's design and its beauty.

God has given to the Russian Orthodox Church many refined artists who were ascetics and rigorous ascetics who were great artists. Among them Andrew Rublev, perhaps the most famous Russian icon-painter who created the famous icon of the Holy Trinity. A monk of our monastery, he was gifted both artistically and spiritually, which is attested by his veneration as a local saint. The Church is planning new canonisations to take place at the National Council on the occasion of the Millennium of the Baptism of Russia. This calls for not only historical preparatory work but, first of all, the implementation of our heritage in our own life.

Tradition cannot live and be implemented without a new generation to come to realise and witness through their life to the values of the Russian ascetical tradition. Transmitting this tradition is impossible without spiritually experienced elders, but it also needs new selfless disciples to continue the tradition in the future. The Church needs continued renewal to renew the world thus renewing herself--this is the meaning of her life on earth.

(Translated from the Russian)

JESUS' FINAL EXAM

by Thomas G. Long*

Text : *There came to him some Sadducees, those who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question, saying. "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife but no children, the man must take the wife and raise up children for his brother. Now there were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and died without children, and the second and third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died. After-ward the woman also died. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be ? For the seven had her as wife." And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage; but those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die any more, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him". And some of the scribes answered, "Teacher, you have spoken well." For they no longer dared to ask him any question (Luke 20:27-40).*

I am not sure that the students who are here this morning would agree with this, but I believe I am right about this one. As a teacher I have discovered that the most difficult part of an examination—a test—is not providing the correct *answers*, but asking the right *questions*. The questions on a test can turn out to be tricky, when we teachers intended them to be straight-

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forward, vague when we were striving for clarity, or easy-as-pie when we were attempting to create a challenge. It is well known that students are openly terrified they are going to give dumb answers; it is not as well known that we teachers are secretly terrified we are going to ask stupid questions.

I heard recently about a geology professor at another university who was writing a question for his final exam. I am sure he was intending for the students to answer this question with the names of various minerals and rock formations, because the question he asked was : "Name three things which are found on the earth which are not found on the moon." But one of the students, knowing a silly question when he saw it, responded, "Roller skates, Bruce Springsteen, and the Republican Party " As I said, the most difficult part of any examination is asking the right questions.

And there is a deeper and broader sense in which this is true. Asking the right questions is difficult not only because the questioner might slip up and ask a dumb question, but also because every question we ask reveals something important about ourselves. Questions are not morally or intellectually neutral, and every time we ask a question, whether it's teacher to student, police to suspect, parent to child, or friend to friend, we reveal our own assumptions about our convictions about what is important, our notions of truth, our own angles of vision, our biases, our concerns, and our limitations. Contained in the question is the assumed world of the questioner.

In his popular book *Between Parent and Child*, Haim Ginott told of Andy, a ten-year-old boy, who asked his father, "What is the number of abandoned children in Harlem ?"

His father, a chemist and an intellectual, was pleased by his son's curiosity and responded with a long lecture on the topic. He then looked up the figure.

Andy, however, was not satisfied. "What is the number of abandoned children in New York City?" "in the United States?" "in Europe?" "in the world?"

Finally the father realized that his son was not concerned about a social problem; he was concerned about being abandoned himself. He was not looking for statistics, but for reassurance.¹ In the question is the assumed world of the questioner.

You can see this relationship between question and assumption at work in our text today. This is a story about a question some religious leaders, the Sadducees, asked Jesus. In fact, the twentieth chapter of Luke contains as a series of questions put to Jesus, each question trickier than the previous one. The twentieth chapter of Luke could be seen as Jesus final rabbinical exam. And as in all exams, the ones asking the questions are being tested as fully as the one who is questioned.

The last, and most difficult, question they asked Jesus was this: Suppose there was a woman who married a man who had six brothers. The man unfortunately dies before they are able to have any children. Now the scripture, the Law of Moses, is clear about this. One of the brothers must take the widow as *his* wife so they can have children and continue his brother's line. So, brother number one steps forward and marries the woman. But, alas, he dies, too, before children are born, so brother number two steps forward. He dies, too. Then comes brother three, four, and so on. All die. Then she dies. There are eight funerals, but no children. Now, here's the question: In the resurrection, whose wife will she be?

This is a trick question in multiple choice form. Jesus can choose A or B. If he chooses A, he picks one of the husbands: In the resurrection she will be the wife of, say, her first husband—or of her last husband. It doesn't matter, really. The point is that Jesus, in choosing A select *one* of them, and the problem with choice A is that it's virtually indefensible. She was equally the wife of all seven brothers. A won't work—so that leaves B. Jesus can choose B, and this is the one the Sadducee questioners secretly hope he will be forced to choose.

Haim G. Ginott, *Between Parent and Child* (New York: Avon Books 1965), pp. 21-22.

B is: You got me there fellows; she can't be the wife of all of them in the resurrection; she can't be the wife of only one of them in the resurrection, so *reductio ad absurdum*, there must be no resurrection.

This is a trick question in which Jesus is given two equally unacceptable choices. He has to choose A—or B. But Jesus surprises his questioners: He chooses C. Which is to say, he doesn't *answer* the question; he *challenges* it. In the question is the assumed world of the questioner, and Jesus calls that world into question.

What is the world assumed in the question? To begin with there is the assumption that, if there is a resurrection, the woman will *belong* to somebody in it. A first-century husband had something like property rights over a wife, and this woman had belonged to seven men in her life, so the only question is, Which one will she belong to in the resurrection? In the question is the assumed world of the questioner, and in that world the woman is some man's possession. As Justo and Catherine Gonzalez point out, "For all intents and purposes, the story could have been about seven brothers who successively inherited a cow from each other."²

In her book *Jesus According to a Woman*, Rachel Wahlberg observes that, by challenging this assumed world, Jesus' response creates a new and gracious world for the woman. She writes.

A woman hears Jesus declaring that she is not someone's property, that she has equal status in the resurrection, that she has a position not relative to anyone else. ...At least in heaven she will not achieve her status through someone else.³

In a larger sense the question Jesus was asked assumes that God's future is simply an extension of what we can see, do, and

²Justo L. and Catherine G. Gonzalez, *Liberation Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980), p. 65.

³Rachel Conrad Wahlberg, *Jesus According to a Woman* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), p. 44.

understand in the present. God's future is merely "more of the same." She was somebody's wife in the present, and it follows logically that she will be somebody's wife in the future. In short, the assumed world of the question is closed to the possibility that God's future might be radically new, radically different from the present constraints on human life. But Jesus does not answer the question; he goes behind the question to challenge the assumption. "In this age people marry; but in that age, the age to come, they do not. In this age people die; in the age to come, there is no death. In this age people are children of pain and suffering; in the age to come they are children of the resurrection...children of God. The age to come is radically new; it is not more of the same."

There is a church I know which formed, several years ago, a committee on hunger. When the committee got together to discuss the issue of hunger, the members were struck by the sheer size of the hunger problem in their city. Many in the city were hungry, and the committee was forced to ask the question, "What can we possibly do about a hunger problem of such magnitude?" Now notice, the assumed world of the questioner is in the question: What can *we* do about the problem of hunger?

Nonetheless, several projects were launched, including a special hunger offering to be taken on the last Sunday of every month. People were to march forward during the singing of the final hymn to place their gifts in baskets, and the money would be spent to alleviate hunger in the city. This program was a great success; thousands and thousands of dollars were given—more than anyone dreamed. But as the months wore on, there was discouragement. Some of the money was misused by the agencies to which it was given. Some was unaccounted for, and, most of all, it was difficult to see any real impact from the program. People were being fed, to be sure, but the lines of hungry people only got longer. In short, for all of their efforts to make a dent in the problem of hunger, every tomorrow looked just like another today—more of the same.

One Sunday, however, during the time for the hunger offering, something unusual happened. People were coming for-

ward bringing dollar bills, envelopes with checks; children marched down with dimes and quarters. Suddenly a woman whom no one recognized got up from her pew and moved toward the basket in the front. She was not very well dressed and she carried no offering in her hand. When she got to the basket, she paused for a moment, folded her hands, and prayed. That was it; she had no money to place in the basket. She had only a prayer. The prayer was her offering, but it was something else as well. It was a visible reminder to all who saw that their gifts were not solutions to the problem of hunger in the city; they were, in their own way, prayers for God to bring in a new age. The woman's action challenged the assumption that gifts to feed the hungry are wasted unless they somehow "solved" the problem of hunger. The offerings were, rather, signs of the new age, the age which will arrive not because we make it come, but because God is bringing it to be.

Most of the religious questions we know how to ask are too small and too narrow :

In the resurrection, whose wife will she be? A or B?
 How can we put an end to hunger? What are the solutions?
 Why do bad things happen to good people? Give me some reasons.
 What is God's will for me today? This or that?

These are not evil questions; they are simply shortsighted questions. In such questions there are the assumptions of the questioners, namely that our questions have answers which can be woven out of the possibilities we can see, responses forged from the circumstances we can touch. Choose one—either A or B.

The hard news is that neither A nor B is correct. The good news is that on the other side of our questions there is not an answer, but there is God, who makes all things new, who brings a future more redemptive than we can imagine.

Much about the life of Charles de Gaulle is well known. What is not so widely known is that Charles and Evonne de Gaulle were the parents of a Down Syndrome child. She was

a treasure to them; she was a concern for them. Regardless of what was occurring in the affairs of state, Charles arranged his life so that he and Evonne would have some time almost every day with their infant daughter. When they would put her to bed, and the child had fallen asleep, Evonne would often ask, "Oh Charles, why couldn't she have been like the others?"

As had been predicted by the physicians, the de Gaulle's daughter died in her youth. There was a private, graveside Mass, and when the priest had pronounced the benediction, all present began to leave the grave—except for Evonne. In her grief, she could not pull herself away. Charles went back to her, gently touched her on the arm, and said, "Come, Evonne. Did you not hear the blessing of the priest? She is now like the others."

"In this age," Jesus said, "people marry, are given in marriage, and die." In this age people shiver through the night with no place to call home, find themselves deprived of human dignity, and perish from loneliness. That is the way it is in this age. In this age people have to make answers for their questions out of the materials at hand—either A or B. "But in that age," Jesus goes on to say, and by so saying points toward an age not governed by the captivities of this age. The promise of the gospel is that the possibilities for human life are not contained in the assumptions of "this age." Because, by the grace of God, there is "that age," "this age" loses its power to condemn. Even now God's new age is gathering us into its embrace, setting us free, and claiming us as God's own sons and daughters.

(Princeton Seminar, Bulletin)

News and Notes

Max Thurian* :

'The Pope's Encyclical on the Virgin Mary'

For example, Italian Baptist Pastor Gioele Fuligno, a member of the WCC Central Committee, said "Italian Protestant churches are now faced with the dilemma of whether the reaffirmation of mariology will allow them to seriously continue the ecumenical dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church." He said that unlike Thurian, he thinks the encyclical" will cool ecumenical dialogue instead of promoting it.

"Even the exegesis which characterizes the document is unacceptable, because biblical statements are interpreted in the marian interests of the text. There was absolutely no need to distract the attention of the churches from the serious commitment to peace, justice, and integrity of creation in order to get them to debate the theme of the Virgin Mary", he concluded.

...The first thing to emphasize is that this reflection is deeply biblical in character, and illuminated by the great patristic Tradition. It is a text which is certain to become a solid base in the ecumenical dialogue on Mary and the church.

Its three parts deal with the mystery of Christ, the mystery of the Church and the actual life of the Church and the Christian. Each part has three chapters. The first comprises exegesis and meditation on the great texts of the New Testament: the Annunciation, the Visitation, the marriage at Cana. The second relates the Virgin Mary to the Church, the people of God, the Church's journey in its ecumenical dialogue, the Magnificat of the pilgrim Church in this world. The third tackles the problem

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of the intercession and mediation of Mary, the Lord's servant, the presence of Mary in church and personal life and, lastly, the significance the Pope wishes to give the Marian year.

The exploration of the full doctrinal and spiritual richness of this encyclical will require long and painstaking study. I should simply like here to stress a few points which struck me on a first reading.

Like the Second Vatican Council, the introduction stresses the deep bond that unites the Church and Mary "whom she (the Church) venerates as her beloved Mother and as her model in faith, hope and charity". Like Mary, the Church combines within herself the qualities of mother and virgin: she brings forth to the new life children who are conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of God and she retains the wholeness and the purity of the faith entrusted to her by Christ.

The first chapter reinterprets the event of the Annunciation in the light of the opening blessing of the Letter to the Ephesians (1 : 4-7). Mary receives the new name *kecharitomene*, "full of grace", and the vocation to be the Mother of the Lord incarnate, because of her predestination and election in God's design.

"In this way, from the first moment of her conception—which is to say, of her existence—she belonged to Christ, sharing in salvific and sanctifying grace. ...In the order of grace, which is participation in the divine nature, Mary receives life from Him to whom she herself, in the order of earthly generation, gave life as a mother." Here John Paul II offers a biblical explanation which helps in the understanding of a doctrine which has often been a bone of contention among divided Christians.

On the subject of the Visitation, the encyclical strongly underlines the part played by faith in Mary's life. ...The encyclical deals at some length with Mary's relationship with the Word of God which she receives and ponders in her heart in faith. Living side by side with her Son, whom it is her mission to follow, day by day under the same family roof in Nazareth, Mary *advances in her pilgrimage of faith* up to the grievous day

of the Cross when that faith is united with Christ in His moment of dereliction. Mary is the first of those who hear the Word of God and keep it (Lk. 11 : 28); she is her Son's first disciple.

The event of the marriage at Cana offers the occasion and the foundation for a very interesting exposition on the maternal mediation of the Mother of God. Mary's maternal role "in no way obscures or diminishes the unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its efficacy." At Cana Mary brings human needs to the attention of her Son. "Her mediation is thus in the nature of intercession: Mary 'intercedes' for mankind. .. At Cana, Mary appears as *believing in Jesus*. Her faith evokes his first 'sign' and helps to kindle the faith of the disciples."

The words uttered by Jesus from the Cross confirm Mary's maternal presence in the Church: "Behold, your son Behold, your mother" (Jn. 19 : 25-27). The motherhood of the Mother of Christ finds a 'new' continuation in the Church and through the Church symbolized and represented by the disciple whom Christ loved. "Thus Mary, who is present in the mystery of Christ as Mother becomes—by the will of the Son and the power of the Holy Spirit—present in the mystery of the Church."...

The Pope's thinking...greatly illumines the subject of Mary's mediation, setting it at the level of maternal intercession and service to her Son through faith, in His work of salvation and sanctification. I believe this doctrinal reflection may be very helpful in the ecumenical dialogue, while clearly reaffirming the Roman Catholic conviction concerning the maternal mediation of Mary interceding for the Church.

The chapter on "The Church's Journey and the Unity of All Christians" clearly shows the ecumenical concern which is a constant feature of John Paul II's ministry... In this part the encyclical highlights all the aspects on which Christians already agree in regard to Mary: the texts of the New Testament, the early Councils (including Ephesus in 431), the Creeds, the icons venerated by Eastern Christians and by more and more Christians in the West...

I believe this encyclical will provide an opportunity for many still-divided Christians to reflect on the place of Mary in the mystery of Christ and of the Church. If, as seems to be the case, ecclesiology is increasingly becoming one of the essential theological areas in ecumenical dialogue, then reflection on Mary as the figure and model of the Church will become more and more necessary.

Lastly, we must mention the Encyclical's very profound meditation on the Magnificat which sounds the "love of preference for the poor" which the Church shares with Mary. ...The third part, on Mary's maternal mediation, again stresses the bond between Mary and the Church, a special bond which began to develop between the Mother of Christ and the Church at the foot of the Cross...

With the food for thought provided by an encyclical as rich in biblical substance and doctrine as this, there is good reason to hope that that the Marian year will be a time of deepening faith, spiritual renewal and progress towards the unity of all Christians. [EPS]

Aldo Comba*

"The Morality of Revolving Funds"

Some weeks ago a visitor to the World Council of Churches happened to call into the ECLOF office. He did not know much about ECLOF, so he was given an outline of the basic mechanism of the ECLOF loan system. When he heard that the borrowers repay their loans into a national revolving fund, he became very excited. That's exactly what's needed", he said, and went on to explain that when he had been working as a development officer with refugees in an Asian country he had tried to establish revolving funds at village level in as many places as possible. Asked why, he answered quietly: "Because it helps people to lose their begging attitude".

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Begging is an ambivalent concept. In the history of Christianity as well as other religions, there have been highly respected and respectable individuals or monastic orders who begged for their livelihood. However, they were usually beneficial in some respect to the society which supported them. Their begging was a humble way of putting their lives into the hands of a society to whom they offered material or other services which that society considered to be important. They were not parasites.

But when a person or a group is unable to engage in useful activity, that person or group becomes marginalized, parasitic, and therefore compelled to adopt a begging attitude, with all the frustration, the resignation, and often the moral decay that this entails. Helping them means more than giving alms: we have to find ways of putting them in a position where they can do something useful for themselves and for society. There is nothing shameful in being dependent on others: the sick are all dependent to a large extent, as are many elderly people, and children too for a number of years. What is shameful is when a person does not want to use (or is prevented from using) his or her ability for his or her own welfare and for society.

I remember a former parishioner of mine, an old peasant woman of nearly 90, who used to walk to the woods every day, coming back a few hours later with a couple of edible mushrooms or a small bundle of kindling for the fire. It wasn't very much, but it was all she could do and she did it: "I'm not yet useless..."

To enable people to do what they can, to give them the possibility of using for their own good and for the good of others whatever ability they have (i.e., the 'gifts' they have received from God)—this is the kind of aid which helps people to live. Merely giving alms often only helps them to survive. But we do not want people merely to survive, we want them to live.

Seen in this perspective, revolving funds are an important means of providing precisely that kind of help. They enable

people to produce, while at the same time providing an easy mechanism for the results of their activity to be shared with others. And even if the loan originally came from elsewhere in the form of a grant, its maintenance as a revolving fund depends entirely on the will and labour of the beneficiaries and their integrity in repaying the loan.

In a revolving fund, repayments are not a toll exacted by some rich moneylender, but an act of solidarity with brothers and sisters in the same area. And vice versa, failure to repay is a failure in solidarity with fellow citizens and members of the same church.

ECLOF is generally described as an agency which lends money on favourable terms for church and development projects. This is no doubt correct, but ECLOF could well be described—and perhaps should fundamentally be described—as an agency which creates revolving funds, replenishing them when inflation threatens to erode them.

In February 1970 the Board of ECLOF met in Geneva and adopted the concept of development as it had been defined at the previous Consultation in Montreux :

“Development (is defined) as projects which promote, in order of importance, first, social justice; second, self-reliance; and only in third place, economic growth”.

National revolving funds are a privileged instrument in promoting such a policy. This is also the reason why ECLOF insists that the National ECLOF Committees should work hard for timely and correct repayment of the loans by the borrower into the national revolving fund. If this were not so, then the whole Montreux philosophy would fall to the ground and the beggar/alms-giver relationship would again prevail.

Fortunately, the great majority of National ECLOF Committees are firm supporters of the Montreux philosophy.

It is our intention to make the ECLOF system of revolving funds better known, and more generously funded, so that the services it provides, and the philosophy it represents, may benefit a greater number of people. (EPS)

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